

FOLDING KNIFE WITH SAFETY LOCK

Cross Reference to Related Applications

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Design Patent Application Serial No. 29/143,656, filed June 18, 2001 for a POCKET KNIFE, JneB1 B1

Background of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates generally to knives, and more particularly to a folding pocket knife with a safety lock to hold a blade of the knife in a closed position. The safety lock is moveably mounted on a handle of the knife, and may slide to a locking position, in which the safety lock prevents the blade from opening out of the handle by obstructing the path of the blade as the blade is urged from a closed position in the handle to an open position out of the handle. The safety lock also may slide away from the locking position, in which the safety lock does not obstruct the path of the blade so that the blade may freely move from the closed position to an open position.

[0003] This safety lock is particularly useful in knives having an assisted opening mechanism, such as those disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,802,722, 5,815,927, and 6,145,202, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. An understanding of some prior locking mechanisms for knives also may be obtained from U.S. Patent Nos. 1,189,005, 1,743,022, 4,133,106,

4,451,982, 4,947,552, 4,974,323, 4,979,301, 5,060,379, 5,092,045, 5,293,690, 5,647,129, and 5,822,866, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0004] The advantages of the present invention will be understood more readily after a consideration of the drawings and the Detailed Description.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0005] Fig. 1 is an isometric view of a knife according to one embodiment of the present invention, including a blade, a handle, and a safety lock, with the blade shown in solid lines in a closed position and in broken lines in an open position, and with the safety lock shown in solid lines in a locking position and in broken lines in an unlocked position, with arrows demonstrating possible movement of the blade and safety lock.

[0006] Fig. 2 is an exploded, isometric view of the knife of Fig. 1.

[0007] Fig. 3 is an exploded, isometric view of a portion of the knife of Fig. 1, taken along line 3-3 of Fig. 2.

[0008] Fig. 4 is a front view of the knife of Fig. 1.

[0009] Fig. 5 is a top view of the knife of Fig. 1.

[0010] Fig. 6 is a bottom view of the knife of Fig. 1.

[0011] Fig. 7 is an end view of the knife of Fig. 1.

Detailed Description and Best Mode of the Invention

[0012] Referring to the drawings, and more specifically to Fig. 1, a folding knife 10 according to one embodiment of the present invention is shown. Knife 10 includes a handle 12 and a blade 14 pivotally coupled to handle 12, as described in more detail below. Preferably, handle 12 is assembled from a first side piece 16 and a second side piece 18 that define a hollow region 20 for receiving blade 14 when blade 14 is in a closed position relative to handle 12. This closed or folded position is shown in solid lines in Fig. 1.

[0013] When blade 14 is in the closed position, a safety lock 22 may slide along a path 24 to a locked position to prevent a distal end 26 of blade 14 from pivoting out of handle 12 to an open position. A solid arrow L shows the preferred movement of safety lock 22. Safety lock 22 may also slide to an unlocked position to allow blade 14 to pivot freely between closed and open positions as indicated by a dashed arrow B.

[0014] Blade 14 may further include a tang 28 with a protruding portion 30 located opposite distal end 26, and a thumb stud 32, both elements useful in aiding a user in the opening of knife 10, as described in more detail below. Knife 10 may

further include a displaceable lining portion 34 that may lock blade 14 in a fully extended position. This is achieved by a bias that causes lining portion 34 to move into the path of blade 14 once blade 14 has moved to a substantially open position. Closing blade 14 requires moving lining portion 34 out of the path of blade 14. These features are further described in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,145,202 and 5,802,722.

[0015] Referring to Fig. 2, the exploded view of knife 10 shows other typical elements of knife 10. Knife 10 includes a pivot pin 36 that allows blade 14 to pivot between open and closed positions and couples side pieces 16 and 18. Knife 10 further includes a spacer 38 that couples side pieces 16 and 18 and together with side pieces 16 and 18, forms hollow region 20 for receiving blade 14, as described above.

[0016] Knife 10 may still further include an assisted opening mechanism 40 that aids a user in opening knife 10. Assisted opening mechanism 40 includes a bias element 42 that urges blade 14 toward the fully extended position once blade 14 has been moved a certain distance from the closed position or past an equilibrium point. Assisted opening mechanism 40 further includes an internal plate 44 that, along with spacer 38, restricts the movement of one end of bias element 42. Bias element 42 is configured to transmit forces between blade 14 and handle 12 and is a push rod including hooks on each end, but alternatively may be a plunger, flexible cable, or other suitable force-transmitting element.

Assisted opening mechanism ⁴⁰36 is described in detail in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,145,202 and 5,802,722.

[0017] As shown in greater detail in Fig. 2, distal end 26 of blade 14 typically includes a point 46, but may include a blunt end or other tool head. As described above, tang 28 includes a portion 30 configured to protrude from handle 12. This allows a user to open blade 14 from the closed position by pushing protruding portion 30 back into hollow region 20, thereby urging blade 14 past the equilibrium point of assisted opening mechanism 40. Blade 14 also may include a thumb stud 32 located on one or both sides of blade 14, which allows a user to apply a force to stud 32 to extend blade 14. These features are useful in one-handed assisted opening devices and safety lock 22 is particularly useful as a safety precaution with these devices. It will be understood that safety lock 22 may also be used for pocket tools and knives that do not include assisted opening mechanisms.

[0018] Referring to Figs. 2 and 3, safety lock 22 is mounted in a channel or slotted hole 48 located in handle 12. Slotted hole 48 preferably is located near distal end 26 of blade 14. Safety lock 22 is configured to obstruct the path of travel of distal end 26 of blade 14 when preventing blade extension, as described above.

[0019] Safety lock 22 preferably includes a bolt 50 configured to attach to a block or latch 52 through slotted hole 48. Block 52 preferably includes a threaded hole 54 to mate with bolt 50. Block 52 typically is constructed of plastic or rubber material to minimize or prevent damage to blade 14 when blade 14 contacts block 52. As long as block 52 of safety lock 22 is obstructing the path of blade 14 or limiting the movement of blade 14, safety lock 22 is operable in preventing the extension of blade 14 and is considered locked.

[0020] Safety lock 22 generally is positioned in one of two positions in slotted hole 48 on handle 12. Safety lock 22 is shown in several of the figures in dashed lines in an unlocked or inoperable position, in which the path of blade 14 is unobstructed. Safety lock 22 is shown in all of Figs. 1-7 in solid lines in a locked or operable position that obstructs the path of blade 14.

[0021] The user may adjust safety lock 22 between locked and unlocked positions by sliding bolt 50 along slotted hole 48. Safety lock 22 is held in a user-selected position by friction. The friction may be adjusted by adjusting the tightness of bolt 50. Safety lock 22 may further include a washer 56 between the head of bolt 50 and handle 12 to enhance frictional contact between handle 12 and lock 22.

[0022] It is believed that the disclosure set forth above encompasses multiple distinct inventions with independent utility. While each of these inventions has

been disclosed in its preferred form, the specific embodiments thereof as disclosed and illustrated herein are not to be considered in a limiting sense as numerous variations are possible. The subject matter of the inventions includes all novel and non-obvious combinations and subcombinations of the various elements, features, functions and/or properties disclosed herein. Similarly, where the claims recite "a" or "a first" element or the equivalent thereof, such claims should be understood to include incorporation of one or more such elements, neither requiring nor excluding two or more such elements.

[0023] It is believed that the following claims particularly point out certain combinations and subcombinations that are directed to one of the disclosed inventions and are novel and non-obvious. Inventions embodied in other combinations and subcombinations of features, functions, elements and/or properties may be claimed through amendment of the present claims or presentation of new claims in this or a related application. Such amended or new claims, whether they are directed to a different invention or directed to the same invention, whether different, broader, narrower or equal in scope to the original claims, are also regarded as included within the subject matter of the inventions of the present disclosure.